
Best Practice Fact Sheet – Workforce Development

COMMUNITY JOBS – Washington State

Program

Description: Administered by the Department of Commerce through contracts with 17 CBOs statewide, provides paid temporary employment with resolution of barriers. Parents gain work skills in a structured, supervised setting, usually leading to an unsubsidized job. Community Jobs is a national model for transitional jobs programs.

Target Population: TANF parents with employment barriers

Goal: To help TANF parents prepare for unsubsidized employment by providing temporary employment, education and training, and barrier management.

Cost: Annual cost - \$21- 25 million

Evidence: Although there have been no evaluations of the program, it is a national model that other states have used to start or improve their transitional jobs programs.

Caseload Data: Annual enrollment approximately 3,600 clients – more than 30,000 since program inception

Services Overview:

- Community Jobs is administered statewide by the Department of Commerce through performance based contracts with 17 community-based organizations
- Community Jobs is a full-time (40 hours per week) WorkFirst activity that combines, paid temporary employment with issue resolution to assist TANF parents with getting and retaining a job
- Key services include one-on-one case management, on the job training, recent work history and employment references, education to support career goals, and support services
- Contractors develop temporary paid positions where parents work 20 hours per week at nonprofit organizations and public agencies. These work assignments provide opportunities for parents to gain job skills in a structured, supervised work environment in a position that supports their career goals
- For many parents co-enrollment in an education activity for a minimum of 10 hours per week is required in addition to their 20 hours per week of paid work experience. For some parents, work hours can be adjusted up to 30 hours per week if they do not need education or educational options are not available.
- The Community Jobs contractors also provide individualized job search assistance to ensure parents gain access to services that will lead to unsubsidized employment

Eligibility:

Participant must be receiving a TANF grant and:

- currently working on issue resolution and are ready to combine issue resolution with work in a supportive setting. Are not viable candidates for placement through Job Search
- interested in curing sanction, if that is the best way to engage the parent in WorkFirst
- ready and able to be employed full-time (32-40 hours per week) within six months of the CJ enrollment
- have childcare and transportation plans
- have known significant mental health and/or substance abuse/chemical dependency issues managed
- have not been previously enrolled in the CJ program (exceptions may be requested through the Department of Commerce)
- have participated in other activities without success

- currently does not hold an unsubsidized job

Findings:

- Parents referred to the CJ program have typically been unable to obtain employment successfully when referred to other programs due to employment barriers.
- The CJ placement rate peaked in early 2008, at 69.3 percent of participants gaining unsubsidized employment during the four quarters after the start of Community Jobs participation. Outcomes were stable, averaging 65% through 2008, despite an increase in the number of parents enrolled in CJ. Job placement rates in all programs dropped in 2009, averaging 54%, when the current recession began to affect employment.

Implications for policymakers and program developers to consider:

- CJ continues to be an effective program to assist parents with employment barriers to obtain unsubsidized employment
- Community Jobs is a full time program and meets the Federal TANF participation requirements
- The CJ program is administered statewide through performance based contracts with local community based organizations
- Wages paid to the parent offset their TANF grant using a 50 percent disregard while they are enrolled in CJ
- Parents benefit from the individualized job search assistance provided by the contractor
- WorkSource offices across the state continue to struggle to meet the demand for employment services
- WorkSource staff does not have the time to devote to TANF parents with multiple barriers and are not considered “job ready”